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The Rest Are Ghosts

by FELover

Summary

This is the thing about life and a guy like me; skepticism. That's it. All my life I've been skeptic, and maybe that's why I end up surprising myself a lot.

Notes

Some stuff that I did is make up some er... slang for the future, I think you would call it that. Nothing too confusing though. Guitars are sometimes referred to as "screechers", and bureaucrats are simply called "'crats". That's it. And Robin is a bit OC. I have no excuse. I just wanted him to be a bit of a bastard, but he's hurting no one but himself, so I guess it's alright.

"I'm an only child, so logically I gave birth to my parents, because if it weren't for me they wouldn't be parents at all, they'd simply be a married couple. (Or maybe without me they wouldn't even have been married!) "

— Jarod Kintz, This Book Has No Title

This is the thing about life and a guy like me; skepticism. That's it. All my life I've been skeptic, and maybe that's why I end up surprising myself a lot. For example, I had never thought I was artistic or 'talented' enough to learn how to play guitar. Today I do play guitar though, and I guess I must be good at it because I was invited to form part of a band at some point. We weren't big or anything. We used to play small gigs, got payed a little. And it's not like I got real popular because

of that. I never liked talking about what it was like being in a band. Like it was such a big deal. *'Yeah. I'm in a band, you know...'* I'm not comfortable talking about it. I mean, I do like playing music and I felt even better playing with the guys… But just… you know, sharing that with other people gave me kind of an itch. I got all awkward because I didn't know what to say or how to say what I didn't know what to say. I was scared of saying something really stupid or douchey. I was always afraid people would make assumptions about me. It's one of the things that suck about being a teenager; the world just *has* to revolve around you, even when you know it's not that way. I'm wasn't stupid, or at least, I didn't want to be stupid. I knew that most of the time people weren't thinking about me, and even when they were, they were not thinking what I thought they were thinking. But I kind of don't give a crap anymore.

I jabbered a good while for now, didn't I? I do that when I'm bored. I just can't stop talking. My brain just fills up with all this crazy information. Memories. I want to figure out how I got myself where I am today, this instant. I have to go through a process in which I make all these crazy connections inside my head, kinda like that game thingy you see in children's books; the connect the dots thing. I know there's a relation between those dots, and that they are supposed to form a picture; a cat, a fish, a house. Something. The thing is, I don't do it right. I draw the lines all wrong, and even though I know I'm wrong, I also get this feeling that I'm right. It's hard to explain, but it can't be just me that feels this way from time to time.

Let's see if I can explain it more clearly. In some books, the dots will come with numbers, right? You get directions. Any toddler with half a brain could do it. Or, well… I don't know. I'm not a Special Ed… er, specialist. Doesn't matter. You know what I mean. Anyway… The dots will come with numbers, and that way you can figure out what picture you're supposed to be making. 1, 2, 3, 4 ,5 ,6, 7… You get it. And if you are really meticulous and follow each step like you're supposed to, you might end up with a super de luxe manor with 50+ rooms, a pool the size of the moon, and underground secret spacecrafting facilities. Like… think of Tom Cruise's mansion in Beverly Hills times a hundred: That's still a rathole compared. See the point I'm trying to make? If you do something real well, following each step they way you're supposed to, without missing a beat, without stopping to wonder if there's a better way to do the task, you get a good reward.

And it's so easy, right? There's nothing hard about connecting a bunch of dots with numbers attached to them. You can do that, right? Just follow instructions. How hard is it, huh? What kind of stupid ignoramus do you have to be to screw up something so simple? The laws of the universe state it simply: Thou shall follow the design.

But here's the anti-clincher, ya'll. Things aren't so simple. Or… they are. Incredibly simple, actually. Incredibly, mind-numbingly, creativity-cripplingly, life-suctioningly simple. I've always had a bit of a rebellious side too, you know? Ever since I started surprising myself I've only gotten gutsier and gutsier and now my middle finger is almost constantly sticking up in salute to God. I thoroughly apologize if you are a devoted sheep of his flock and this offends you, but hey, it's a free country. As I see it, I can commit just about every stupidity under the sun as long as I'm not bothering anyone. And I haven't bothered anyone… that I know of. It's not like anyone would notice, either way. Only if you're a bit special, like me for example, you'll start to notice that something ain't so kosher with the sausage anymore. Maybe, through a process of very complex and well-crafted readjustments to the events in history, Teddy Roosevelt is now immortalized in the books but without his magnificent facial hair.

See? It's nothing too terrible. I'm not the one in charge of making the biggies.

You're probably confused at this point though. Let me introduce myself, for starters. AHEM. My name is Robin C. Jeung (¼ Korean), and I work for some company you have never heard and may never hear about within your lifetime. We do things, for which we are paid. As for who pays us, I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to say. I wouldn't have to kill you, no. I'd have to completely and

utterly erase your existence from this and probably many other universes. It's cleansing duty I'm never in the mood for. Do you know how much trouble it takes to erase one single human being from the universal grid of life? I mean; the paperwork! Goodness, eliminating a person is so much simpler than all that crap. It's all a matter of calculation. Let's say for example… Your daddy bangs your mommy on some given day of some given year at some given time at a given place. Well then, I can do lots of things to make sure you are never conceived. I could seduce your mom, for one. If I like her enough. Or your dad. I don't discriminate. Or I can just kill you off if I don't have the energy. I can arrange for a horrible face-deforming incident to occur… If you really have pissed me off. The 'crats don't really mind if we get a bit too creative, as long as we get the job done. Or I can be merciful as well. Who says us Drifters are all heartless mongrels? Firstly, that term is so wrong being used on people. Mongrels, I mean. I get why they use it, but... bah. It's still offensive, you know?

But back to the time traveling thing. I didn't say, did I? That's what I do for a living. I really thought I'd be the next Hendrix, but I found something way more rewarding that just my music. The love for music just kind of evolved into something more; the love for numbers, and that love evolved into something… else. Music is like Gottfried Leibniz said: "The sensation of counting without being aware you were counting". And that's just it people! All my life, I'd always been a math-lover, a paradoxer, and a Drifter, but because they didn't invent the technology to travel in time until the year 4076 and they didn't recruit me until I was twenty five, of course I'd lived the dullest thirteen years of my life before the invention. I'd never considered time travel!. Nope. Not even once. Weird huh? A normal person should think about going back in time to change things at least once. But not me. No sir. Not old Robin. Give him a pick and a screecher and he's happy as a dog with a bone, because that's what makes dogs happy, you know? That's how things are supposed to be. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and all that jazz. There's an order in the world: Give the dog a bone.

And I was given a bone alright. If I hadn't been recruited, I swear I could have lived a very unaware and happy life in the shade. The technology didn't… er, I mean, it doesn't exist in this time. I sometimes forget what year I'm in. Sorry if my confusion messes with your ability to understand. I better put dates to this. As you know, this is the year 2055. It's getting warm here in Wisconsin, at last, and time travel is pretty much an impossibility. For you. Right now I'm talking with a nice prospect at a bar. And man, does she promise. She's smart as Einstein plus a little extra. And those legs? Honey, they go for days. But enough flattering myself, let's get to the important stuff. You're gonna like this. This is my masterpiece.

"Well, congrats." She says. I've just told her it's my birthday to try and convince her to dance. I think she likes me as much as I her neon pink nail polish.

"Oh, no. " I respond. "I don't like taking credit for others' work. In this case, my mom and dad. Or possibly my mom and the mailman."

Take note guys. The way to a woman's heart is through inducing rhythmically vocalized expiratory and involuntary actions. So, laughter and fucking work the same, actually. Fucking isn't much of an option here in public though…

"You suck," she says. "You stole that from Jarod Kintz."

"You read his book? We have so much in common!"

"Pfft."

"Today's your birthday too isn't it? Birthdays. Funny word to remind you it's the anniversary of the result of that time mommy put out."

I believe she's looking at me weird because she thinks I'm grossly offensive and because I know what I know.

"It's not my birthday."

"Yeah it is."

"How're you so sure?"

"Because, honey?" I lean in real close. Private space invader like. "I came with an offer."

Oh, I know the rise of those brows. I pull out my card. It's got my name on it. Nothing more.

"Ha ha," She says fakely. "Nice trick. Who gave you my name? Tell me and maybe I'll let you go with a slap on the hand."

I told you this is my masterpiece, right?

"No one, hon."

That's because it is. Let no one tell you a paradox can't be paradoctored. There's no one but you. And the rest are just ghosts. I want to prove something to myself. I mean… Ourselves.

"I know, because I'm…"

Say something weird enough, just the right amount of pringles, and any person will follow you down the stairs of your creepy house without electricity. The house is just a front. The real show's belowground. I've this… how do I explain this to you without pissing off the boss? I've this gizmo. And all you need to know about it is that it pretty much basically defies the Connect the Dots thingy from the children's book we spoke of before. You kept that in mind, right? Alright, so what I'm about to do is, I'm gonna get bonkers with the pencil. Here we are, February the 23th, 2055. I'm heading for August the 14th, 2019. I'm dropping off the girl at my residence then. She's a smart girl. I'm sure she can figure out something out when she realizes I'm not coming back to pick her up. She's a strong girl.

Next stop is June the 2nd, 2029, same place. Even in her thirties, this girl has got good legs. I suppose a familiar face, no matter how hated, is welcomed when you've been thrown out of a time travel machine, and you've been living ten years before your very conception day. I assume that's what. Otherwise Robin might have not been in such a sexy mood. As it turns out, I really can't resist myself.

Afterwards, I'm going to the offices in New York, 3907. We've got some places like this scattered about. Don't concern yourself too much about them. I'm just here to get rid of something between my legs and to buy myself some skirts and wigs. I have to get to February the 23th, 2030. Robin's giving birth to our baby; a healthy baby boy. I'm there to dress up as Becky the nurse and take him away. I'm dropping him off somewhere in 4003. There's plenty of orphanages around, still. (See? Cravenness is immortal) I'm naming him Robin and putting him in the basket. I like cheesy. Shut up. He's gonna grow up liking music but being skeptical about his 'talent' or the power of effort, and he's gonna grow empty. But you know what? It's not gonna stop him. He's got this itch, this curiosity. That's why I choose him. He loves numbers and the idea of messing with God and the dots. True; his pictures may not be pretty, and nobody really can make out what his designs are supposed to be.

A cat with a bellyache? An hydra? A… what the fuck?!

No way for Robin to defend himself when they call him a mongrel at work now, huh? Oh well… I gotta get to recruiting him then. Somewhere in 4089. He'll be twenty five and almost completely empty inside. Five years later, a professional, real handsome and wicked (more this than that), he'll get the queerest idea. He's gonna go to 2055 where I'll be waiting at a bar, all neon pink nail polish and long legs that go for days.

And now I'm here. Pretending that it's not my birthday. I think I can stop here. It's funny, y'all. I'm kinda… bored. Heh. Funny. I'm having a midlife crisis. How did I get here, anyway? How did ya'll get here? Fuck it, I don't have time to think about that. I bet all my travels have been recorded by the Time Travel Control Department and now I got a ton of paperwork to do. I should really have thought about that before messing with the design. Ugh...

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